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FOLK-LORE.

No. III.

MAY-DAY AND MIDSUMMER.

BY MR. N. O'KEARNEY.

[Read at the Meeting of September 3rd.]

LA Bealtine, the day of Baal's fire, as the first day of the month of May is called in Irish, was unquestionably a day on which a solemn festival was held by the Druids; possibly the most solemn festival in the Pagan calendar—the festival of **LA SAMHNA**, the first day of November, excepted. It has been frequently alleged that little or no trace of Druidical religion can now be discovered, because the reminiscences relative to it found in authentic Irish manuscripts are too meagre and insufficient to found anything like a rational theory upon their authority. There is, it must be confessed, strong ground for this argument, especially in case there were no other aids to fall back on: but if we look carefully around us, examine Ireland as we find her, attend to the traditions that yet remain among us, and compare them with the strange customs still prevalent in many places, and with such extraneous rites as we find analogous with them, a theory may yet be formed which will throw much light upon many mystic passages found in Irish manuscripts, as well as on Irish history itself, though it may not be found sufficient for the full developement of the ancient Druidic religion. In elucidation, it is necessary to give a few of the strange customs that were practised, and many of which are still practised, at the periodical return of May-day and midsummer.

On the morning of Bealtine, it was customary with such as possessed cattle, especially herdsmen, who were skilled in the old practices, to omit lighting their fires until mid-day at least, when the sun was at his meridian altitude, or until they found that their less cunning neighbours had lighted theirs; for then no danger, as they supposed, was to be apprehended. The reason they assigned for this custom was, that witches and other malicious creatures, invisible as well as visible, possessed power to rob them of the produce of their dairies, and to do great injury to their cattle and other substance. Those who were addicted to these customs would on no account permit any person, even their most intimate friend or dearest relation, to take away any portion of their fires, when lighted, outside of their houses on that day, because they imagined that it would be unlucky and would militate against their prosperity; and to such a degree of exactness was the prohibition carried out that a mother was known to have refused her daughter, who lived in the neighbourhood, and whose "fire went out," as the phrase goes, an ember to kindle her fire to dress food for her children and husband. This absurd practice, it is clear, did not emanate from any principle of Christianity, but was a relic of the Druidic prohibition,

which forbade any person to light a fire on that day, or derive an ember to kindle a fire from any other source, except from their own sacred fires, for which each family paid a certain tax. An extract from the *Leabhar Breac*, given in the "Book of Rights," published by the Celtic Society,* will throw some light on the nature of the prohibition respecting the Druids' fire:—"Patrick goes afterwards to Fearta Fear Feicc. A fire is kindled by him at that place on Easter eve. Laegaire is enraged as he sees the fire, for that was the *geis* [prohibition] of Teamhair among the Gaedh-hil; and no one dared to kindle a fire in Ireland on that day until it should be first kindled at Teamhair at the solemnity," by the Druids, it may, perhaps, be added. It little matters whether the fire described above was the Baal fire, or any other Druidical fire, since the sacred fire was lighted more than once in the year, under equally stringent prohibitions, as appears by an extract from St. Patrick's Life by St. Mochta†:—"Erat quoque quidam mos apud illos per edictum omnibus intimatus ut quicumque in cunctis regionibus sive procul, sive juxtà, in illâ nocte incendissent ignem, antequam in domu regiâ, id est, in palatio Temoriæ, succenderetur, *periret anima ejus de populo suo.*" It was in consequence of the fear inculcated by the threat of this very severe penalty, and the dread of supernatural evils, with which the Druids threatened the people as a judgment for the clandestine violation of their ordinances, that the superstitious practices of neglecting to kindle fires, or give any portion of fire to light that of their neighbours, prevailed.

It seems probable that the Druids consecrated water, as well as fire, on the eve of Baal, and possibly prohibited its use, except what was drawn from their sacred fountains; and that it was a source of revenue to them, as well as fire. No authority, however, has yet been found for this assumption, except it can be inferred from a practice very prevalent, of drawing the first water after midnight, from wells and fountains; this was called *ṛṣaṛt an tobaṛn* (the purity of the well)—positively a relic of Pagan superstition. The people of each village, or townland, usually sat up on the eve of Bealtine, that they might overreach one another in drawing the first draught or pitcher of water from their wells and fountains. As the water should be drawn furtively, many an ingenious plan and cunning stratagem would be devised and used to outwit the rest of the neighbours in procuring the *ṛṣaṛt*. Whoever succeeded usually cast a tuft of grass into the well, which warned all others that that well had been robbed of its *ṛṣaṛt*. This first water was carefully preserved during the year, and was looked upon as a powerful charm or antidote against witchcraft and other imaginary evils which impended; it was also considered very lucky to keep it in the house.

Another custom was scrupulously observed after sunset on the eve of Bealtine. Farmers, accompanied by their servants and domestics, were accustomed to walk around the boundaries of their farms in a

* *Book of Rights*, Introd. p. xlix.

† *Ibid.*

sort of procession, carrying implements of husbandry, seeds of corn, *ṛṣāṇē aṇ tobāṇu*, and other requisites, especially the sacred herb, *beaṇ mṛṇ* (vervain), if any person were fortunate enough to possess a sprig of it. The procession always halted at the most convenient stations facing the four cardinal points, beginning at the east, and went through several ceremonies, particularly that of digging a sod, breaking it fine, and then sowing seed, after which they sprinkled the glebe with *ṛṣāṇē aṇ tobāṇu*. They then drove all their cows into one place, and examined their tails, lest a witch or evil-disposed person might there conceal a sprig of the rowan tree, or some other bewitched token. If any suspicious bramble were found attached to a cow's tail, it was immediately taken and burned, and a sprig of vervain, if convenient, or a branch of the rowan substituted instead; for the rowan was potent for good as well as evil, if it were cut before sunrise on Bealtine morning. The cows were afterwards sprinkled with *ṛṣāṇē aṇ tobāṇu*, preserved since last May-day, which ended the ceremony.

It cannot be conveniently denied that these customs, too, were remnants of the superstitions practised in the olden time. The Hindus of the present day look upon the Cussha grass as sacred, and use it in almost all their lustrations. Our species of grass, called *cuisheag*, was once used for similar purposes, if we may credit herb-doctors and charm-mongers; and the casting a tuft of it into the wells, on the night of Bealtine, was, possibly, once a sacred rite. The Hindus, too, have their cow-festival, called *Gósht'háshtamī*, which is held on the 8th of Cártica; on this festival cows are attended to the pasture, hand-fed, and caressed; and the Hindus walk round them with ceremony, keeping them always to the right.* These customs in Ireland, and similar ceremonies in Hindustan, were performed with the view of conciliating the moon, which was represented by the cow, in order that the deity represented by that animal, which was also a type of the earth, like the Rhea of the Latins, and Rae of the Irish, would deign to insure them a prosperous harvest. This is clearly shown by the following:—Prithu having been churned from an aperture made in the right arm of his father Vena, was, unlike his wicked brother who had been churned from the left arm, a beautiful boy, and proved to be the form of Vishnu. “Gods and men came to make obeisance to him, and celebrate his appearance on earth. He married a form of the goddess Lacshmi. In his time, the earth having refused to give her wonted supplies to mankind, Prithu began to beat and wound her. The earth, assuming the shape of a cow, went to the high grounds of Meru, and there laid her complaint before the supreme court, who rejected it; as she acknowledged, that she had refused the common necessities of life, not only to mankind in general, but to Prithu himself, whose wife she was in a human shape. Prithu and his descendants were allowed to beat and wound her in case of non-compliance with the decree of the supreme

* *Asiat. Res.*, vol. iii. pp. 265, 266.

court. The earth submitted reluctantly, and since that time mankind are continually beating and wounding her, with ploughs, harrows, hoes, and other instruments of husbandry.”* Though this is an allegorical legend, it is singular that this Prithu was the sun, since he is said to have been a form of Vishnu; for Vishnu was the name of the sun at night, or when in the west. The sun is Bráhma in the east, while it is morning; and from noon to evening he is Siva, a circumstance which throws some light on the Irish custom of breaking up a sod of turf at the four cardinal points, on the eve of Baal, or the sun’s festival, a ceremony which originated, no doubt, from a more rational cause than can be, at present, discerned. It, too, is worthy of remark, that the Hindu triad, Bráhma, Vishnu, and Siva, like Baal, Budh, and Grian of the Irish Druids, is nothing more, despite the compound mystification of their mythology, but the one and same object, namely the sun, the great deity of the Pagan world, whose festival was wont to be held on Lá Bealtine by the Irish Druids.

It may be also remarked that the same Lacshmi, the earth, moon, or goddess of prosperity, is frequently invoked as a cow. A cow is held by the tail, an approximation to the Irish custom, and the following prayer repeated, according to the Hindu ritual:—“1. May the goddess, who is the Lachsmi of all beings, and resides among the gods, assume the shape of a milch cow, and procure me comfort. 2. May the goddess who is Rudráni in a corporeal form, and who is the beloved of Siva, assume the shape of a milch cow, and procure me comfort. 3. May she, who is Lachsmí reposing on the bosom of Vishnu; she, who is the Lachsmí of the regent of riches; she, who is the Lacshmi of kings, be a boon-granting cow to me. 4. May she, who is the Lachsmí of Brahmá; she, who is Swáhá, the wife of fire; she, who is the exerted power of the sun, moon, and stars, assume the shape of a milch cow for [my] prosperity.”† Hence, it is clear that this goddess of prosperity, who was invoked to assume the shape of a cow, was considered to have been the wife of fire or the sun and moon; and the cow, on account of her productiveness, was made the emblem of both in compound sense, since the moon was always considered to have great influence over the earth, its fruits, and the seeds committed to the earth, and, therefore, the cow was the most fit and tangible object for the ceremony.

That the Druids looked upon the bovine species as sacred animals, some may doubt, nay deny; but if we attend to tradition, we can easily learn that they held the species in veneration, if they did not actually pay divine honours to the animal, like the old Egyptians. It would, indeed, be tedious to mention even the titles of the legends relative to mythic bulls and cows still extant: suffice it to say, that such animals as the Fionn Beannach, the celebrated bull of Connaught, and the more mythic Donn Cuailgne of Ulster, whose extraordinary powers are set forth in the “*Tain Bo Cuailgne*,” were certainly not ordinary animals; for had the Donn Cuailgne, as an animal, taken the gold medal at all the

* *Asiat. Res.*, vol. v. pp. 253, 254.

† *Ibid.*, vol. vii. p. 263.

cattle-shows in the Island, since the very day he had been calved, were he nothing more than a bull, it is absurd to suppose for a moment that the Connacians were so foolish as to wage a bloody war for seven years with the Ultonians to obtain possession of the animal.* Such an inference may be drawn from the traditions of the people—who believe in the existence of an ærial bull, called by some Tarbh Conaire, and imagine that a certain disease incident to horned cattle, called *geimneach*, and *urgartha*, is caused by hearing his lowing in the air—from topographical terms, with which numerous legends of mythic bulls and cows are associated, and, lastly, from the practices of the people with respect to their cows. It is possible to presume that the Druids were the originators of those customs, since we find that they used to drive cattle between their sacred fires :—" *Beltime*, i.e., *Biltine*, i.e., lucky fire, i.e., two fires which used to be made by the lawgivers or Druids, with great incantations, and they used to drive the cattle between them [to guard] against the diseases of each year. Or, Bel-dine; Bel was the name of an idol god. It was on it [i.e., on that day] that the firstlings of every kind of cattle used to be exhibited as in the possession of Bel."† Hence, it appears that the Druids made use of cattle at their sacred fire, and exacted an offering of their firstlings to their deity. It is, perhaps, in commemoration of this offering, that some old folks, for no reason that could be assigned, except that some invisible being of the spiritual world required some nourishment which through their tenderheartedness they could not refuse, used to pour the first milk drawn from a newly-calved cow, at the foot of a solitary or sacred white thorn. Analogous with this is the Hindu custom of offering milk, curds, &c., to the manes of their ancestors. The hawthorn is still considered to be under the tutelage of the "good people," or fairies; and it is a branch of it that is used as a May-bush, circumstances almost sufficient to warrant the inference that the hawthorn had been sacred to Bel, or the sun.

The Baal-fire was lighted by the Druids at Tlachta, on the first day of the month of May: it is still lighted in Dublin and its vicinity on that day; but in all other parts of Ireland on the eve of the festival of St. John the Baptist. A few say that the change was caused by St. Patrick with the view of doing honour to the precursor of the Redeemer; the most prevalent account, however, is that fires had been lighted on that eve as a preconcerted signal for the Irish to make a general onslaught upon the Danes, who grievously oppressed them at that time. This has some show of probability, and may account for the Baal-fire being continued in Dublin on the eve of Bealtine. If the fires had really been lighted on midsummer-eve, as a signal for a general massacre of the Danes, throughout Ireland, it is possible that, since Dublin was the principal stronghold of the foreigners in Ireland, fires were not lighted there on that occasion, or, if the Danes were massacred, it is reasonable to suppose that those of Dublin would prohibit

* Vid. *Tain Bo Cuailgne*, et alibi.

† Vid. *Book of Rights*, Int. p. liii.

fires being lighted to commemorate the anniversary of the slaughter of their countrymen—reasons strong enough to warrant the prevalence of the practice of lighting the Baal-fire on the day of Baal in Dublin only. But there are reasons to suspect that the midsummer fires were originally lighted by the Druids on that night as well as on the eve of Baal. It is, indeed, possible, nay probable, that on that day, when the sun reached the zenith of his annual glory, a festival was held in his honour. On that eve many strange practices are still prevalent, such as gathering the seed of the common fern or *filix major vulgaris*, performing certain kinds of divinations, competent, as they are supposed, to reveal the names, and manifest the personal appearances of the destined help-mates of the performers, and other absurd mummeries, which are never known to be practised, except on days dedicated to Pagan rites.

It was a general practice, about eighty years ago, in most villages, to erect long poles called May-poles; but these, too, fell into disuetude, except in a few places, especially in the village of Finglas, near Dublin, where the pole stood, until the clergy of the parish caused it to be destroyed and the “fun” dispensed with, some two or three years ago. The pole was evidently used in the Druidical ceremonies, since it is so used in the East to the present day, and was held in such vogue by the Irish to a late period, as shall be hereafter shown.

In most places the poles of Baal’s day were, like the Baal’s fire, set up on midsummer-day; and these are the poles that can be best described by personal observation, though there is sufficient living evidence to testify to the amount of apparently meaningless mummery exhibited in connexion with the poles of La Bealtine. It must be observed that the poles set up on St. John’s day were always erected where fairs, “patterns,” or any other merry-makings took place; perhaps the assemblies were originally instituted in consequence of setting up the poles in those places. The midsummer-pole was always called *craebh*, and was dressed with considerable taste with flowers and silk kerchiefs and ribbons; it was generally as lofty as the mast of a sloop, and on its top a small basket of cakes or gingerbread, and a large bunch of parti-coloured worsted garters were tied. The best musician attending the assembly was always selected to perform at the foot of the *craebh*, or pole; and the best dancers vied with one another for the honour of winning the gingerbread and garters—the young man got the garters, and the lady the gingerbread. The winners were held in as high estimation as if, in days of yore, they had won the first prize at the Olympic games; for they were said—“*gur bhuaín siad an chraebh as lar an aenaich*,” i.e., that they bore away the prize from the whole assembly; and many a sweet Irish ditty resounded their praises; and it was always their own fault if they remained unmarried to contest for the next anniversary prize. It is a pity that the local clergy found excuses sufficiently strong to suppress these innocent amusements—for innocent they certainly were, in the absence of extraneous vice, since the performers knew not the origin of their diversions.

The May-pole ceremony was evidently of very ancient origin, since tradition itself does not pretend to reach it, and, therefore, conjecture as to its original use may be pardonable. A gentleman of varied learning and of splendid talents, who has made large collections of the legendary and traditionary lore of the country, and taken much pains to reduce them to a system, and who, if this sketch meets his eye, as probably it shall, will kindly pardon the unwarranted use of his remarks, writes concerning the May-pole :—

“Having given much attention to the subject, I am quite satisfied that such was the fact (viz. that lakes were considered as types of the youi) ; for every lake in Ireland was considered, and still is, as *draoidh-each*, and that all islands in lakes had reference to the same. In Hindostan, as lakes are types of the youi, so islands are types of the Lingam. Mountains also—surely all the Sliabh Budhs in Ireland at least—were named from the idea of this object. As to the May-pole, I give you an extract concerning India :—‘Poles to represent the Lingam are set up before the houses ; and where timber is not to be had conveniently, they form large heaps of earth or mud, to represent that object.’ In Ireland the same practice was observed 200 years ago, as may be seen in Vallancey’s *Collectanea*, vol. i. p. 123. In a description of Westmeath, by Sir Henry Piers, is found :—‘On May-eve every family sets up before their door a green bush, strowed over with yellow flowers, which the meadows yield plentifully ; in countries where timber is plentiful, they erect tall slender trees, which stand high, and they continue almost the whole year, so as a stranger would go nigh to imagine that they were all signs of ale-sellers, and that all houses were ale-houses.’ This passage refers directly to Westmeath, but would indirectly appear to comprehend many parts of Ireland.

It remains, however, to be shown that the ancient Irish understood the May-pole as a type of the Lingam. In the absence of direct proof, I think we have strong inferential evidence that they did so understand it. Those who have inquired into the habits of the peasantry must perceive that absurdities, I shall not say obscenities, are either openly or covertly intended in that section of them which relates to the procuring of husbands. The search for worms—the plan of separating two of them—the use made of the knife employed for that purpose, are all, unquestionably, highly obscene, deserving of general censure, and referring to the May-pole, or May-bush, as a type of the Lingam.” It is, indeed, well known that the May-bush, like the heap of mud, represented the pole in localities where timber was scarce. May-bushes are—or were, at least, some twelve or fourteen years ago—set up before almost every door in the Counties of Louth, Cavan, part of Meath, and Monaghan ; the custom was rather on the decline then, and, possibly, is now entirely neglected. The people could not tell the meaning of this custom, except that it was merely an ancient one ; and yet, it must have had some meaning, since it was considered an omen of some misfortune should the bush droop, fall from its place, or be otherwise removed, before sunrise on May-day.

It appears that on the festival of Bhavání, generally held on or about the first of May, according to the state of the moon, the May-pole custom is prevalent in the East, as may be seen by a paper in the "Asiatic Researches," by Colonel Pearse.*—"I beg leave to point out to the Society, that the Sunday before last was the festival of Bhavání, which is annually celebrated by the Gópas, and all other Hindus who keep horned cattle for use or profit: on this feast they visit gardens, erect a pole in the fields, and adorn it with pendants and garlands. The Sunday before last was our first of May, on which the same rites are performed by the same class of people in England, where it is well known to be a relique of ancient superstition in that country: it should seem, therefore, that the religion of the East and the old religion of Britain had a strong affinity. Bhavání has another festival; but that is not kept by any one set of Hindus in particular, and this is appropriated to one class of people: this is constantly held on the ninth of Baisác'h." There can be no doubt but the Druidical tenets of Britain and Ireland were the same, and had a strong affinity to the religion of the East, since between the relics of it lingering both in Ireland and Britain, so close an affinity to the Hindu rites of the present day is found.

The sun was Vishnu; and Crishna was another term in religion for the same planet, as may safely be inferred from Hindu theology, as well as from the Irish word *críar*, a name for the sun. The reason for worshipping Crishna, or the sun, by shepherds and shepherdesses in the East, is much more intelligible from the nature of the Irish ceremonies than even from that of those who actually profess that form of worship to this day. The Hindus assert that Crishna was the son of Devaci and Vasudèva; and it was found necessary to conceal his birth from the tyrant Cansa, to whom it had been predicted that a child born at that time would destroy him. He was fostered by a herdsman named Ananda, and his wife Yasodá, who tended the dairy. The constant companions of the god were a crowd of Gópas, or cow-herds, and Gópis, or milk-maids; and he is represented as spending a pleasant life among his rustic companions. Hence the veneration paid by cow-herds and milk-maids to Crishna, and the frantic rollicking of the same class of persons, in some parts of England, up to the present time.

On the fifteenth of Aswina, flowers were offered to Syámà, or the Black, an epithet of this same Bhavání, who appears in the Calijug, as a damsel twelve years old. Analogous with this is the custom, not many years ago prevalent in some localities, of carrying around from house to house, the figure of a baby or lass, apparently about the same age, on May-day. This female figure, which was usually decked out with great taste, was called *baibin Bealtaine*—in English, May-baby; though there are reasons for suspecting that *baibin* should not be translated "baby." The *baibin* was always carried by young girls, who usually sung the old Irish pastoral, "*cuzaomar féin an raíomra linn*" (we

have brought the summer with us), when the procession reached any dwelling-house, the attendants used to exclaim to the persons inside, “Seo áuzarb an raírra—deanaiðe uinlaçt don t-raírra” (here cometh summer, do ye salute the summer), a circumstance strong enough to warrant that the *baibin* ceremony was a religious one, descended from the dark days of Paganism.

Though this paper has been drawn out to too great a length, it should not be omitted to state, that such as assembled at the bonfires on midsummer-eve, were wont to dance around them, and, as it were, in imitation of the old Druidical custom of dispensing the sacred fire to the people, each person carried home a lucky coal or ember from the bonfire. The same custom is said to have prevailed at the Baal-fires in Dublin, about forty years ago.* This bonfire dance is analogous with that performed by the Ammonian priests around a fire, in honour of the sun. Bryant (vol. i. p. 336) says:—“The Ammonian priests used to dance round a large fire in honour of the sun, whose orbit they affected to describe. At the same time they exhibited other feats of activity, to amuse the votaries who resorted to their temples. This dance was sometimes performed in armour, especially in Crete; and being called Pyrric, was supposed to have been so named from Pyrrus, the son of Achilles. But when was he in Crete? Besides, it is said to be practised by the Argonautic heroes before his time. It was a religious dance denominated from πυρ (fire), with which it was accompanied.” It is very probable that dances similar to those of the Ammonian priests had been anciently practised at May and midsummer fires, and degenerated to the common country dances; for old folk used to relate that rustic performers, armed with a pair of cudgels, used to go through a kind of military dance with great dexterity, around bonfires, May-poles, and *craebhs*. It was called “Colla Ciotach’s march,” and generally supposed to have been introduced by a member of the Mac Mahon family, named Colla Ciotach, or Colla the left-handed; but the supposition appears to have been erroneously founded; for none could tell on what occasion it was invented, or even when this Colla himself flourished. Whether or not this military dance was the same as the “Droghedy dance,” cannot be exactly determined, since neither ever came under my personal observation. A gentleman who has had an opportunity of collecting many wanton orgies which disgraced wakes in Munster, says:—“The highly obscene manner of the performance of the dance called ‘Droghedy’ is very objectionable: in it one party is supposed to be killed, whereupon the music becomes plaintive; but when this party revives, every symptom of rejoicing ensues. I may remark concerning this dance, that each performer uses two short sticks, and in a Hindu painting Crishna is represented dancing, with a stick in

* This custom is still prevalent in the eastern and southern parts of Ireland; we are informed by Mr. Hitchcock that he has often witnessed it in Kerry, and we can bear testimony ourselves to its existence in the County of Kerry.—Eds.

each hand; he is depicted nine times—once with each of his nine Gópis. In this curious picture he himself plays a flute sitting in the centre, the performance being enacted by the Gópis and himself. To return to the ‘Droghedy,’ it is the Morris-dance, which I have seen performed in Portugal and England—the same in tune and action. The common notion is, that it was introduced into those countries by John of Gaunt, son of Edward III., but I think it was practised in both England and Ireland before the Romans came into Britain.”

Tradition also relates that females used to perform on these occasions as well as men. The principal female was called *Amuid shugach*, and used to dress in a very fantastic costume, and perform a very frantic meaningless dance. This character has long since ceased to perform her merry pranks in Ulster, where the practice is said to have principally prevailed. It may be remarked that the title *Amuid* bears a close resemblance, both in character and name, to the Amida of the Ethiopians, around whose statue they were accustomed to dance. Here we come again to sun and moon associations; for Budda and Amida are the principal deities of the Siamese, and generally supposed to have been the sun and moon.

MISCELLANEOUS ANTIQUITIES.

DISCOVERY OF A CIST NEAR FOULKSRATH CASTLE.—The following statement was furnished by the Rev. James Mease, corresponding member for the Freshford district:—

A ploughman of Mr. Wright's of Foulksrath, in turning up a field near the castle, last April, came in contact with a large stone, within about six inches of the surface. Directions were given for its removal, when it was discovered to be the upper stone of a cist, of which the following will be found a pretty accurate description.—In depth it was about four feet from the general surface of the ground. It was formed of two parallel walls, of rough stones, without any cement. It was terminated at the north end by another wall; at the south no wall could be discovered, though, perhaps, our researches were not carried far enough; but the parallel walls appeared to come to an end. These walls were about three feet in height; their length seven feet and a-half; the interval between them two and a-half feet. The covering-stone which was placed across the cist, and not lengthwise, was four and a-half feet in length, and one and a-half feet in breadth. All the stones were limestone, except the two supporters of the long covering-stone;